



Office of Research on
Minority Health

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Major Epidemiologic Study Strives to Improve the Health of African Americans with Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States and strikes African Americans at a disproportionately high rate. African Americans experience hypertension more frequently, severely, and at an earlier age than White Americans. They also have higher rates of heart disease deaths, nonfatal and fatal stroke, and end-stage renal disease. Moreover, despite the a 30-year decline in cardiovascular deaths for the Nation as a whole, recent data indicate that African Americans are falling even further behind in cardiovascular health. In particular, the gap between cardiovascular health of the White and Black population is growing in Mississippi even more rapidly than across the Nation.

In response to this crisis, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have joined in partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson State University, and Tougaloo College to implement the Jackson Heart Study (JHS).

“The JHS is unprecedented in its focus since it is the first prospective epidemiological study of CVD in African Americans,” said Dr. Herman Taylor, Director and Principal Investigator of the JHS. “Previously, such studies have been conducted either predominately or exclusively with White participants. While such studies have produced a wealth of significant findings, they leave unanswered many questions about the epidemic of CVD being experienced by the Black community. The JHS will attempt to provide new insights leading to better approaches for eliminating the alarming gap in health between Blacks and the rest of the population.”

The JHS will investigate risk factors for cardiovascular disease, especially those relating to hypertension and stroke, in African American men and women living in Jackson, Mississippi. It is an expansion of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study site in Jackson, Mississippi. The JHS will interview and examine 6,500 African Americans aged 35-84. This cohort will include all ARIC participants in Jackson plus newly recruited individuals and families. JHS recruitment will begin in September 2000.

Examinations and interviews will encompass a broad spectrum of physiologic, medical, social, cultural, and demographic factors.

The JHS will also enhance research capabilities of the local minority institutions, attract and prepare minority students for careers in epidemiology and public health, and establish a NHLBI field site in Jackson, Mississippi similar to those established for the Framingham Heart Study and the Honolulu Heart Program.

The JHS will accomplish its objectives through the collaborative efforts of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC), Jackson State University (JSU), and Tougaloo College (TC). The JHS Participant Examination Center is under the direction of UMC, the JHS Coordinating Center and community mobilization activities are under the direction of JSU, and the Undergraduate Training Center is based at TC. The Collaborative Studies Coordinating Center at the University of North Carolina, the Coordinating Center for ARIC, is serving as an Advisory Coordinating Center to JHS.

The ORMH and the NHLBI have implemented a campaign to increase awareness of the opportunities offered by Jackson Heart Study for the African American community and for researchers in minority health and epidemiology.

The Jackson Heart Study will begin its initial phase of investigation in the fall of 2000. "It is anticipated that this important study will provide critical information about the causes and prevention of cardiovascular disease in African Americans and will stimulate future research efforts by creating a cadre of investigators committed to improving the health of minority Americans," said Dr. John Ruffin, Associate Director for Minority Health, National Institutes of Health. "Moreover, the Jackson Heart Study is the successor to the famous Framingham Heart Study and, in the end, like Framingham it will contribute to improving the health of all Americans and countless millions around the world."

The NHLBI, a component of the NIH, provides leadership for a national program in diseases of the heart, blood vessels, lung, and blood; blood resources; and sleep disorders. To visit the NHLBI Web site, go to <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov> Information about the Jackson Heart Study may be found at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/jackson/index.htm>

The Office of Research on Minority Health is responsible for stimulating new research ideas for improving the health status of minority Americans across the lifespan and in promoting programs aimed at expanding the participation of underrepresented minorities in all aspects of biomedical and behavioral research. To visit the ORMH Web site, go to www1.od.nih.gov/ORMH

To access more information on the Jackson Heart Study, visit <http://ccaix.jsu.edu/~jhs/>

